

Week Ending Friday, July 20, 2007

The President's Radio Address

July 14, 2007

Good morning. This week, my administration submitted to Congress an interim report on the situation in Iraq. This report provides an initial assessment of how the Iraqi Government is doing in meeting the 18 benchmarks that Congress asked us to measure. This is a preliminary report. In September, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will return to Washington to provide a more comprehensive assessment.

The interim report released this week finds that the Iraqis have made satisfactory progress in eight areas, such as providing the three brigades they promised for the surge, establishing joint security stations in Baghdad neighborhoods, and providing \$10 billion of their own money for reconstruction. In eight other areas, the progress was unsatisfactory, such as failing to prepare for local elections or pass a law to share oil revenues. In two remaining areas, the progress was too unclear to be characterized one way or the other.

Those who believe that the battle in Iraq is lost are pointing to the unsatisfactory performance on some of the political benchmarks. Those of us who believe the battle in Iraq can and must be won see the satisfactory performance on several of the security benchmarks as a cause for optimism. Our strategy is built on the premise that progress on security will pave the way for political progress. This report shows that conditions can change, progress can be made, and the fight in Iraq can be won.

The strategy we are now pursuing is markedly different from the one we were following last year. It became clear that our approach in Iraq was not working. So I consulted my national security team, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and military commanders and diplomats on the ground. I brought in outside experts to hear their ideas. And after listening to this advice, in January, I an-

nounced a new way forward: sending reinforcements to help the Iraqis protect their people; improve their security forces; and advance the difficult process of reconciliation at both the national and local levels.

Our recent experience in Anbar Province shows what we hope to achieve throughout Iraq. As recently as last September, Anbar was held up as an example of America's failure in Iraq. Around the same time, the situation began to change. Sunni tribes that had been fighting alongside Al Qaida against our coalition came forward to fight alongside our coalition against Al Qaida. So I sent reinforcements to take advantage of this opportunity. And together we have driven Al Qaida from most of Anbar's capital city of Ramadi, and attacks there are now at a 2-year low.

We are now carrying out operations to replicate the success in Anbar in other parts of the country, especially in the regions in and around Baghdad. We are starting to take the initiative away from Al Qaida and aiding the rise of an Iraqi Government that can protect its people, deliver basic services, and be an ally in the war against extremists and radicals. By doing this, we are creating the conditions that will allow our troops to begin coming home. When America starts drawing down our forces in Iraq, it will be because our military commanders say the conditions on the ground are right, not because pollsters say it would be good politics.

Some people say the surge has been going for 6 months and that is long enough to conclude that it has failed. In fact, the final reinforcements arrived in Iraq just a month ago, and only then was General Petraeus able to launch the surge in full force. He and the troops who have begun these dangerous operations deserve the time and resources to carry them out.

To begin to bring troops home before our commanders tell us we are ready would be dangerous for our country. It would mean surrendering the future of Iraq to Al Qaida,

risking a humanitarian catastrophe, and allowing the terrorists to establish a safe haven in Iraq and gain control of vast oil resources they could use to fund new attacks on America. And it would increase the probability that American troops would have to return at some later date to confront an enemy that is even more dangerous.

Most Americans want to see two things in Iraq: They want to see our troops succeed, and they want to see our troops begin to come home. We can do both, and we will. Our troops in Iraq are serving bravely. They're making great sacrifices. Changing the conditions in Iraq is difficult, and it can be done. The best way to start bringing these good men and women home is to make sure the surge succeeds.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on July 13 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 14. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 13 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a White House Tee-Ball Game

July 15, 2007

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome here to tee-ball on the South Lawn of the White House. I'm honored to be joined here with the commissioner for today's game, member of the Hall of Fame, the great Frank Robinson. Thanks for being here.

Frank Robinson. My pleasure.

The President. Mario, thanks, great job on the anthem. I thank the Color Guard, as well, for being here. Today we're going to have an outstanding contest. Laura and I are proud to be able to watch, from Los Angeles, California, the Little League Dodgers, and from Brooklyn, New York, the Little League Highlanders. And we want to welcome the players. We particularly thank the coaches

for working with these youngsters. Thanks for getting them interested in baseball, America's greatest sport. We want to thank the parents who have come. Thank you for supporting the kids. And we're looking forward to a good game.

Today—every day is a special day when we play baseball at the White House, but today is particularly special since we're going to pay homage to Jackie Robinson. Jackie Robinson, as you know, broke the color barrier in baseball, but there were some pioneers ahead of Jackie. And today we're proud to welcome Negro League players who are here. Thank you all for coming.

Imagine what baseball would have been like had you been a part of the Major Leagues. Jackie Robinson was a pioneer, and Frank and I are going to retire his number, just like they did all over Major League parks across our country. But before we do, we're proud that members of the Brooklyn Dodger team who had the honor of playing with Jackie Robinson have joined us: Tommy Lasorda; Don Newcombe; Clyde King; and Ralph Branca.

We're honored you're here. Thank you all for coming. Thanks for being a part of this special ball game. As a matter of fact, two of you are going to end up being first and third base coach. I wish you all the best out there. Looks like we've got some good players that have come to play.

I do want to thank John Warner, Senator John Warner from the great State of Virginia, and his family, for joining us. Proud you're here, Senator. I see Alphonso Jackson and Dirk Kempthorne, of my Cabinet, who have joined us. I'm proud you all are here. Dutch Morial, thanks for coming Dutch, appreciate you coming—I mean, Marc Morial—there he is, Marc, how you doing, brother? He's the head of the Urban League. Roslyn Brock, vice chairman of the NAACP, has joined us as well. Thank you all for coming.

We want to thank the Jackie Robinson Foundation for joining us today, as well as the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club of America for being here. Thank you all for coming.

I'm so honored that this game is going to be called by Karl Ravech, ESPN. Thanks for coming, Karl.